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ABSTRACT

This set of five papers suggests that professors in college philosophy, music, government, and history departments, as well as those in English departments, may be able to teach writing in their disciplines, if only they work at the task. The first paper, written by a member of the English department, provides the rationale for the formation of an interdisciplinary writing proficiency steering committee made up of faculty members who teach writing seminar courses. The remaining four papers were written by content area teachers in philosophy, music, government, and history and describe course objectives in those disciplines as follows: to compare and contrast the pedagogy of logic and dance as applied to developing analytic and argumentative skills in philosophy; to translate the language of music into English; to stress use of sources and organizing skills in weighing alternatives in government policy; and to use the study of history in various ways to achieve the traditional approaches to writing--the personal, analytical, comparative, descriptive, and the inductive or deductive paper. (AEA)

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# [PAPERS FROM SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE WRITING SEMINAR.]

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"You're in English--YOU Teach Them to Write"

Here's a story that nobody actually ever told us, yet it is as etched on our collective professorial unconscious as any archetype could be. Once upon a time, all college students were literate. That was the golden age. All faculties took joy in the clear and graceful writing of students, but none took so great a joy as the English faculty. Words, after all, and all the power and beauty of language, were especially the province of the English department. English departments were proud of their close intimacy with language, and gloried in prose. When the dark times came, the SAT's tumbling, open admissions policies covering the land, when college students descended into illiteracy, all the other departments turned as one to the English department and said, "You basked in glory when students could write, so now it's up to you to do something about all this ineptitude." And so the comp-lit course was born, and now we are all making our thrice-weekly sacrifice on the alter of composition.

All this happened, as far as I can tell, just moments before I began teaching. My older colleagues always talk about those happy days when nobody needed to worry about teaching writing. And when I was in school, comp literature was what you did when you examined Greek and Elizabethean tragedies cheek to cheek. I learned quite rapidly--in the trenches--that the hyphenated comp-lit was quite a different sort of hybrid. What I true for me is true for the majority of my departmental colleagues at Saint Mary's College, and true, I would imagine, for many professors of English across the country: my training--not to mention my interest (at least initially)--is in literature, not composition. Yet by some quirk of association, by some academic sleight-of-hand, English departments have become also departments of composition, sometimes to such a great extent that the majority of students enrolled in the department are enrolled in composition service courses. This is no news to any of us. In my college, at least some of those courses--perhaps most of them--are taught by persons having as little training in teaching composition as I have had--that is to say, no training at all.

Most English departments are not, I think, in a position to handle the enormous remedial and developmental composition chores currently given to them. Nor ought English departments to assume such exclusive responsibility, and that for several reasons. When writing is located exclusively within the English department, literate prose comes to be thought of as "their" peculiar interest, a professional preoccupation having little to do with other more lively aspects of reality. Again, if writing is taught only in conjunction with writing-about-literature topics, the relationship of writing to the thinking process itself (as distinct from its relationship to literature) becomes problematical or at least unnecessarily opaque to the student. And faculty in other disciplines come to think that writing problems are the English department's concern and ought to be remedied by that department alone.

Six years ago at Saint Mary's College, in the course of a curricular revision, demonstrated proficiency in writing was established as a requirement for graduation. As the requirement was envisioned, and as it has in fact been implemented, competency could be demonstrated in a number of writing seminar courses throughout the college, in virtually every department in the humanities and social sciences (and at least potentially in some of the sciences as well). The rationale behind the decision to establish a writing competency requirement and to implement it in courses involving all of the departments of the college was based on a simple premise: that all Saint Mary's graduates should be able to write, and well. Not just English majors, but nursing students, and fine arts majors, and mathematicians. Writing was not to be expected simply of one class of students; it didn't make very much sense, then, that it should be an exclusive purview of only one discipline. Hence writing must be a college-wide concern. Literate prose should be stressed at every level of the student's academic career, in her major courses as well as her core curriculum courses. All faculty members bear responsibility for reinforcing the value of good writing.

The basic principle that students can and should write in all disciplines also had a secondary theoretical basis, namely that for some students acquiring writing skills was in itself difficult enough as to make it unnecessarily difficult if it were also complicated with writing about literature. It seemed to us reasonable that students might exhibit their best writing in those content areas in which they felt at least some comfort or some interest. Any faculty member who was willing to follow the assignment guidelines of a steering committee was welcome to propose a writing seminar in his or her discipline. Some of these volunteers were a bit bashful; they received hand-tendered invitations from Ann Loux, who had gotten their names by lurking in corridors listening to students complain about faculty: "Who does that Bruce Gustafson think he is, anyonw, an English teacher? Imagine criticizing my language in a music paper." Or, "Why does Mr. Poinsatte always insist on thesis statement and prewriting? It's history, for heaven's sake." Or, "Dan Mandell actually lowered my grade on a philosophy paper for bad writing." Or even the simple, poignant, "Gee, Mrs. Marcy sure makes you write. I thought this was a government class." People like Mrs. Marcy, and Mr. Mandell, and Mr. Poinsatte, and Mr. Gustafson (whose papers will follow) were pressed into service and encouraged to develop courses in their disciplines which legitimitized what they were already doing--teaching writing.

Right now about a third of the writing seminar courses offered at the college are taught outside the English department. And whether within or outside English, the courses are taught by faculty who are consistently involved in the interdisciplinary Writing Proficiency steering committee. We all work together; we meet once a month. The committee is the only larger-than-departmental intellectual organization at our college, and it has accrued enormous benefits for us all. The first is the collegiality of the experience itself. The second is the freedom for people even in English to admit that they have something to learn about the teaching of writing. This has come out in a covert way as we have been asked by people outside English to help and have been

forced to admit or to acknowledge to ourselves that we've been whistling in the dark too, that we're not really trained writing teachers in the English department. We learn from other departments about the relationship between writing skills and subject matter, about the peculiar powers of certain disciplines to elicit certain sorts of expertise in writing. We work on evaluating each other's portfolios in grim but productive sessions at the end of the semester, and have developed a very wide sense of what student writers are doing across the entire student body. We serve, all of us, as literacy guerrillas in our disciplines, repeatedly bringing up at department meetings the need for continual stress on the essay, on writing becoming an integral part of every course for which it is at all possible, on introducing upper-level writing proficiency projects throughout the college. We are, in short, bringing composition out of isolation and putting it into the much wider context of seeing it as a tool for the thinking process in whatever discipline.

All in all, the increase of the writing program to involve teachers throughout the curriculum has created at Saint Mary's not the new golden age in writing, but at least a workable and heartening reality.

--Linnea Vacca, Department of English

## Developing Analytic and Argumentative Skills in Philosophy

Too often I have approached my teaching of the skills of analysis and argument as though I were training students in the martial arts; preparing each student to use a number of weapons in the logical armory, read for whatever dialectical contests life might bring. Usually I am unsuccessful in convincing the student, and even myself, that it is worth the effort necessary to master this joyless discipline. This year, as I prepared to teach another lower division "Introduction to Philosophy," with a special focus on writing proficiency, I happened to read the following passage of Nietzsche's:

> Learning to think. Our schoools no longer have any idea what this means. Everywhere the practice, the vocation of logic is beginning to die out. Thinking has to be learned in the way that dancing has to be learned, as a form of dancing . . .

The image of thought as a form of inner dance made a deep impression.

My peaceloving students (who by the way are largely freshmen or sophomore women) are naturally less interested in a philosophical version of the martial arts than they are in self-expression; they are quite understandably less interested in the rhetoric of dialectical confrontation than in the adventure of self-discovery and the communication of these discoveries.

During the semester, however, I have discovered real pedagogical implications in Nietzsche's analogy. Both logic and dance are forms of self-expression and communication which presuppose a certain amount of ability, agility, and goodly amounts of discipline. Both involve a number of skills which in the beginning are lifeless mechanical forms; but once assimilated they provide a liberating structure and vehicle for self-expression. Self-expression requires not only controlled activity, but activity that is controlled in a way that makes sense to others; there is little room for rampant exhibitionism in either philosophical discussion or dance.

And yet there are differences, too. Dancing provides a sense of joyful release and forgetfulness of self, which logic and grammar seldom allow (at least I seldom see this release in philosophy classes). Then, too, the skills of analysis and argument are more intimidating to the beginning student, although not necessarily more difficult than dance! (I think I would find it more difficult to learn to dance, but this may be partly a result of the deadly social stereotyping men suffer from today. Women students, having long been rewarded for their grace and agility, expect more from themselves in that area.) Nevertheless, just as I would find it painful to learn a new dance step, my students seem to suffer greatly when I interject the requirements of evidence or logic into a discussion of the metaphysical implications of the problem

of evil. Whatever be the reason, students master logic only after considerable effort.

A second main difference that is important to note (because it helps to explain the difficulty already mentioned) is that dance is a form of self-expression which is both direct and immediate. It presents itself with no necessary thought of anything beyond (with no ulterior motives), whereas the skills of analysis are but a means to an end. The end is not achieved in dissecting an argument, but in the formation of beliefs grounded in evidence, and a set of reasonable attitudes and values. The skills of Grammar, Rhetoric, and Logic are a traditional means to an end, that end being the development of a personality and character in a creative and intelligent way. But by being too remotely separated from the end, they become separated from the rewards, and seem but lifeless intermediaries. No one is uninterested in the goal of self-actualization, but frequently need reminders of the relation between mastering the skills of grammar and logic and this goal. The student who is interested in coming to some understanding of life, and in expressing beliefs in a manner that is clear, will naturally be interested in the basic skills which make this possible. This is an issue which I had long overlooked and which comes very naturally to the fore in a Writing Proficiency course. The WORD has enormous power to shape our inner world, to organize our feelings and intuitions into a public, social syntax which helps us resolve or at least clarify disagreements and differences. We know things not directly but via the word patterns and concepts they evoke in us. Understanding is discursive, and no configuration of feeling, attitudes, and values is stable without conceptual support. Thinking has to be learned in the way that dancing has to be learned, but with more reminders about the goal, an articulate and independent personality. After some practice, the skills become a spontaneous part of the person's way of seeing the world--and at that point, there is no distinguishing the dancer from the dance.

There are surely compromises that have to be made in the content of a philosophy course that is also a writing proficiency course, but I have found it a real asset to be able to focus more attention on basic skills of expression and analysis. Students will take away little of the content anyway, but I hope they will absorb some habits of thought, and clear expression. It gives me the greatest pleasure to discover students who have assimilated some of these skills in a semester, and are growing in self-confidence as a result.

As a teacher, I have become more aware of the need to structure assignments in such a way as to begin with fundamentals. The first few weeks I spend on logic, the theory of sound arguments, and early Socratic dialogues like the Meno. The first written exercises are short expository essays, in which students learn to identify arguments and analyze their structure. After having studied several philosophers, it becomes useful for students to write comparative essays. Later on, after the class is comfortable with the standards expected in these warm-up exercises in expository writing, we move to assignments which call for the critical examination of a philosophical position; students must now learn to search for alternative viewpoints, to investigate the implicit assumptions

and consequences of a position, in addition to reconstructing the arguments; they must now begin to evaluate in a logical manner, and to defend their evaluation.

In this choreography there is little opportunity for students to master a wide variety of types of writing assignments; they need time to adjust to writing philosophy papers, and seem to have their hands full with the three or four types of composition mentioned. Some students, particularly those who have major writing difficulties, cannot handle the material at all; on the other hand, some who have difficulties handling other kinds of writing assignments seem to do well with this highly structured format. I do stress the dance metaphor in opening lectures, because I think it helps with motivational difficulties, if students <u>see</u> the connection between logic, grammar, and self-expression. In early assignments I try to stress the fact that a paper whose <u>ideas</u> are hopelessly scrambled is often defective because one of the basics has been overlooked. I needn't attack the person's lack of thought--I can speak less menacingly of a lack of orderly development or organization, or the lack of a coherent thesis. Finally, the dance metaphor has prevented me from taking myself too seriously. I am too sympathetic (given my own lack of grace on a dance floor) to expect too much from beginning students.

There is a beautiful poem by Sir John Davies which I shall surely read to my students on the last day of the semester; it anticipates Nietzsche's idea by three hundred years. In his "Poem on Dancing," Davies expresses his Pythagorean vision of the liberal arts. Having already sung the praises of grammar and rhetoric, he turns in the final stanza to logic:

> These arts of speech the guides and marshals are,
> But <u>logic</u> leadeth reason in a <u>dance</u>,
> Reason, the cynosure and bright lodestar
> In this world's sea, to avoid the rocks of chance;
> For with close following and continuance
> One reason doth another so ensue
> As, in conclusion, still the dance is true.

--Dan Mandell, Philosophy Department

## Translating the Language of Music into English

Of all the cliches about music, the one which I find most objectionable is this: "music is a universal language." I don't dispute the assertion that it is a language of sorts--it unquestionably communicates emotion to the listener who is familiar with its way. But music is no more universal than English; not only is the farmer in mainland China unmoved and mystified by a Beatles' song, but the American freshman, nurtured on mellow rock and innocuous easly listening, has little entree to a Beethoven symphony. In my Music Appreciation/Writing Proficiency course, which is designed for students who have been exposed to even less music than grammar, I attempt to provide the tools necessary for a rudimentary understanding of Western music. Because music exists in time and not in space, and because it communicates by implications rather than statements, writing about it can be exceedingly difficult. Unless the student develops the habit of direct, logical thinking and writing (which is inextricably bound to good grammar), her writings about music can never be meaningful. Music is vague, but a statement about music must be specific.

Let's take an example: "This beautiful song is very flowing." At first reading, you may be quite satisired with that statement--all the words make sense, and it even has a verb! (I admit that in many cases the student supplies the verb only after some prodding from me, but that is a fairly simple matter.) The nub of a more difficult problem is that this sentence can be and has been applied to works as different as Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet and Bach's Second Brandenburg Concerto. "This beautiful song is very flowing"? Clearly a more precise vocabulary is in order. Aside from the technical distinction that neither of these examples is a song (a song is sung), the problem is that although both possess flowing melodies, so does 90% of all music. We are a long way from saying anything that would suggest the difference between a lively baroque concerto and a surging romantic tone poem.

Developing a vocabulary for music can be dangerous, however. Many technical terms must be introduced, and even the experienced writer and trained musician can slip over the line into descriptive jargon. Here is the sort of thing: "The principal subject, hitherto only heard in the treble, is transferred to the bass, the violins playing a new counterpoint to it instead of the original mere accompaniment figure of the first part. Then the parts are reversed, the violins taking the subject and the basses the counterpoint figure, and so on till we come to a close on the dominant of D minor, a nearly related key, and then comes the passage by which we return to the first subject in its original form and key." This passage was written in the 1890's and caught the attention of George Bernard Shaw, who was characteristically unmerciful in his criticism: "How succulent this is; and how full of Mesopotamian words like 'the dominant of D minor'! I will now, ladies and gentlemen, give you my celebrated 'analysis' of Hamlet's soliloquy on suicide, in the same scientific style. 'Shakespeare, dispensing with the customary exordium, announces his subject at once in the infinitive, in which mood

it is presently repeated after a short connecting passage in which, brief as it is, we recognize the alternative and negative forms on which so much of the significance of repetition depends. Here we reach a colon; and a pointed pository phrase, in which the accent falls decisively on the relative pronoun, brings us to the first full stop'."

The student can become lost as easily in grammatical and rhetorical classification as in meaningless musical description. We are dealing with students who already use both English and musical language, however imperfectly, and in both areas I attempt to provide only the minimum of analytical tools, emphasizing directness, simplicity and logic. The results are perhaps a bit Teutonic but at least not Mesopotamian! Some excursions to the southland are unavoidable; the student simply must know and understand verbs, melodies, semicolons and rhythms, for example. But I cannot teach chromatic modulation or dependent clauses--at least not by name--to students who never practiced scales or diagrammed sentences as children. What I <u>can</u> teach is a more useful notion, that of form--both first-movement form in symphonies and paragraph organization in essays. I take the same approach to both, beginning with sentence pairs and with an analysis of the phrase structure of a simple melody.

Seeing logic and form in music, using a limited technical vocabulary, is entirely compatible with writing logical prose. My main reason for joining the writing program at Saint Mary's was, in fact, a small revelation which came to me (like many such thoughts) while I was avoiding the chore of grading a set of miserable papers. The enlightenment was as follows: if a sentence or paper doesn't make sense, it most certainly can't make sense about music. I can't teach anything about the language of music if the students and I can't make use of the language of English.

The order of events which I tried most recently was to begin with vocabulary and to work towards an argumentative essay dealing with musical styles. One pitfall which I now avoid is <u>ever</u> to involve the question of liking or disliking. All students already have both an exposure to some styles of music and a congenital attraction for the easy-way-out; therefore any question involving taste boils down to an adamant "I know what I like and I have a right to my opinion." I once assigned a paper which I thought would provoke students to think about music in nontechnical terms. The assignment was to discuss their emotional reactions to a piece of music, explaining what in the music caused the reactions. I was confronted with a battalion of students whose sole emotional response to diverse compositions (seemingly) was one of "liking beautiful songs that flowed." That year, by the way, all music was also "mellow."

Now I begin with descriptive vocabulary divorced from prose. (A descriptive essay turns out to be very difficult to organize.) An initial autobiographical paper entitled "Music in My Life" serves a diagnostic function. The first serious steps in writing come with developing compare/contrast sentences, using the newly acquired vocabulary to make two units which are parallel. This leads easily to a

compare/contrast essay about two musical compositions and prepares the ground for an analytical assignment. Since it is impossible for these students to make a penetrating analysis of a musical score, the subject for dissection is a concert program: Why did the performer choose the works on a program and play them in a certain order? At first students feel that they have no way to handle the question; with a little help, they see the same aesthetic concerns of balance, unity and variety which we have discussed in defining musical styles. Finally, I ask students to grapple with a question which demands a reasoned response: "To the 20th-century spirit, is baroque music or romantic music more accessible?" It really is a delight to see students slowly realize that they do now have the means to write a decent argument on one side or the other, even though they still don't understand the terms "chromatic modulation" or "dependent clause."

--Bruce Gustafson, Music Department

## Weighing Alternatives in Government Policy

The course in which I try to combine the teaching of writing and of government is called Contemporary Political Issues. This beautiful title can justify almost any subject one cares to treat. I usually ask my students what they would like to discuss, add some of my favorite topics, and develop a syllabus based on our combined preferences. The course has written sections and regular sections. The regular sections are usually filled rapidly by upperclassmen interested in politics, choosing an elective. The writing section, on the other hand, generally draws freshmen taking a requirement--freshmen who have little background, little knowledge, many of whom have never thought a political thought. My comments here refer mainly to the writing section, although I may at times draw an example or two from the regular section.

Because of the lack of political background of my students, there are certain things that could be done in a government/writing course which I do not attempt. My interest in teaching writing developed when I returned to teaching after a rather long break, and was horrified by papers which made no sense, which were not clear. The need for focus, for clear and exact expression, has remained my main concern. In a government course one could teach students to write persuasively, to try to convince. But to do this one must first give them an idea of their audience. I have tried this--while studying the Panama Canal issue last year I asked students to write to their senators, urging them to vote the way the student preferred. I suggested that they try to take into account the ideas and attitudes of the person receiving the letter when forming their arguments. This part of the assignment was not a success. I realized that it was too complicated to teach at the same time the facts about the Panama Canal and the political ideas of a number of senators. So I now am content with striving for clarity and coherence.

What kind of skills can be developed in a government course? The nature of our subject gives opportunities to work on certain kinds of mechanical errors, and a great deal of practice in using sources; and the nature of our assignments makes students work on certain skills in organizing and developing a paper. None of these skills belongs exclusively to government, but they are skills that we stress a good deal.

First the mechanical problems. Government has no special contribution to make in helping students with most of these problems, but there is one area where mistakes are frequent, and where correction and drill become frequent. We use many collective nouns in our field--party, legislature, administration, sometimes the word government itself. Many students find it very difficult to use singular verbs and pronouns, when they know that the reality to which they are referring is plural. The same is true perhaps to a greater extent for names of countries. Often a singular verb will follow the noun, but later a plural pronoun will appear, and soon everything will be totally confused. These errors provide two opportunities--to stress the rules and make the students correct their work, and, something I find more interesting, to show how

the sentences can be reworded, how to avoid difficulties by using a plural antecedent. Making students rewrite these ambiguous sentences until they are clear and correct is, I think, a very useful exercise.

Next, sources. I do not ask my students to write a research paper, but nearly all the short papers I assign require them to do some reading, to find some information beyond that given in class. This gives me many opportunities to make the students use their sources properly. I am not so much concerned with the exactness of their footnote style, as with the way they integrate the information they have obtained and make the paper their own. Students must do this, and by the end of the course they should have some idea of how to make a paper their own work.

But I think that the main contribution that a writing course in government can make is due to the kind of assignments we give. I start the semester with some descriptive assignments, but we move very quickly to analysis. In fact in our field, description (or chronology) is usually an "out" chosen by a student trying to simplify an assignment, as a plot summary may be for some of your students. Certain kinds of assignments recur constantly: "discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a policy, an action, etc." Or, "compare two policies for solving a given problem"--which is really the first kind of assignment doubled.[1] Some examples:

pros/cons: Nelson Rockefeller's being named Vice President, ERA, Panama Canal, any candidate (strengths/weaknesses), recognition of China, high price for oil, death penalty

compare: cash grants/services in welfare policy, fiscal/monetary policy in a given situation, volunteer army/draft

All of these assignments oblige students to enumerate a number of points, marshall evidence, and draw a conclusion. Why is this useful?

The virtue of the procedure is this: it forces students to use evidence. When you are comparing advantages and disadvantages, it is easy to see that an unsupported statement carries no weight. You must give facts, reasons--it is very obvious if they are not there. It also gives students practice in using cause and effect relations. Much of this analysis uses "if . . . then" statements: if you take this action then you will have the following consequences. Students do not always make these relations properly, but in a government course they have ample opportunity to correct their mistakes and try again the next time. At first many state that a given cause will be followed by a certain effect, with no attempt to explain how. For example, in a recent set of papers on the ERA, opponents of its passage told me that the Equal Rights Amendment would tell women they had to work; put an end to alimony; make women lose their uniqueness. (I don't believe that the vague use of terms such as uniqueness is found only in government courses! So I won't dwell on that.) Supporters of the ERA told me that passage

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[1]The first kind of assignment can also be split--explain and defend your position: one side of an issue.

would open more opportunities for women in graduate school, and would assure older women of better retirement. In none of these cases did the writer explain how the cause was to lead to the effect.

I no longer have my Panama Canal papers, but they too were full of gaps in cause and effect reasoning. I remember one set of examples that was particularly interesting: one opponent of the treaties said that if they were ratified, the Russians would take over the area. Another student, a treaty supporter, told me that if the treaties were not ratified, the Russians would take over the area. Both of these arguments have been developed by more or less reputable people, which is a sign of the ambiguous nature of politics. But the students were content merely to state them, and the papers were sent back to be redone.

This incorrect use of cause and effect is of course very common in writing and in conversation at all levels of society. But in a government class the students must be careful to reject or accept a policy for real reasons. They must learn to spell out the steps of the cause/effect relationship, to avoid generalizations and hasty conclusions. If they learn this in one field, it should help them in others.

After studying the pros and cons, the student must reach a conclusion--she must justify her preferences, and the weight given to one element over another. Here I believe the writing helps the politics, perhaps more than the reverse. If a student has been obliged to write clear arguments, and to complete the missing links in her reasoning, she should read better conclusions. She should also be conscious that both sides usually have a few good points, that whatever solution is adopted, problems will remain--that politics is seldom a field where one side is right and the other wrong. By making students write a great deal, and by insisting that they write reasonably well, I think I can force them to think more clearly about politics. And by forcing them to think more clearly, I hope I can help them develop skills which they will use in their writing in other areas.

--Teresa Marcy, Government Department

## Can Clio Teach Writing?

When Professor Loux, the Director of the Saint Mary's Writing Proficiency Program, first approached me about offering a writing course in history, I must admit I agreed with some misgivings. Although I had been teaching for twenty-five years and had corrected enough essays to earn the Distinguished Blue Book Award, I never thought of myself as an instructor in writing. I envisioned myself as a split infinitive trying to act both as a teacher of history and composition, and doing justice to neither.

Yet I knew that the great historians have most often been great writers and that great writers have often been great teachers of history. Until the late nineteenth century, history was considered literature, and students learned to write by studying the style of a Thucydides or Gibbon.

While I did not consider myself either a great historian or writer, I knew I could recognize both, and in fact with some modifications could use a survey course to teach both history and writing and quite possibly achieve the final objectives of the course in a far better way.

Let us briefly examine what I had been doing in my course and what had to be modified or given additional stress in order to teach history through writing and writing through history.

(1) The foundation of good writing is the ability to read good material with comprehension. Therefore, the reading assignments must be given priority. This means more than a textbook. Selections must be varied and taken from both primary and secondary sources. To read Washington's "Farewell Address" or the Jefferson-Adams letters is to capture the sense of history and to learn a good deal about writing. A selection from Bruce Catton is narration at its best.

(2) Examinations must be fairly frequent and emphasize the essay answer. One can and should vary the questions in order to achieve different objectives, but above all one should choose the questions carefully and structure them well. Poor answers often result from poorly worded questions.

Time must be given to the reading and correction of these essays. It is not necessarily a mark of good teaching to return examinations the following class day.

In stressing writing one must require the students to rewrite essays. This was an addition to my previous program, but I have found that the students benefit both in their knowledge of history and their ability to write.

(3) The third ingredient for a successful W course in history

is the short paper frequently assigned. While, on occasion, I had previously used short written assignments, I had not made them a structured and integral part of the course.

It is possible to use the study of history and the reading assignments in various ways to achieve the traditional approaches to writing, i.e., the personal, analytical, comparative, descriptive, and the inductive or deductive paper. The following are a few examples of the papers which I have assigned during the past year.

(a) Of the various reasons advanced for the study of history in Chapter I of Understanding History, which do you believe are the most persuasive? Why? Can you offer any additional reasons for the study of American history, especially reasons taken from your own experiences?

(b) The material contained in pages 28 to 31 of Understanding History suggests various ways of developing a sense of history. Do any of these suggestions reinforce your personal experience? If so, describe the experience and the historical insight you gained.

(c) In a manner which would be useful to a historian fifty years from now, describe any important event which you have witnessed.

(d) Assume that the U.S. discovers a distant planet on which life similar to that on earth is detected. You are asked by the President to write a statement of policies to be followed in colonizing the new planet. What general and/or specific directives would you suggest?

(e) Of the 13 original English colonies, which one would you have selected as the site of your new home, assuming you had a free choice around the first half of the 18th century? Why? (In your answer, indicate something about your chosen background and values--religious, economic, social, etc.--that would influence your choice.)

(f) Compare the reactions of the American people to the assassinations of Presidents Garfield and Kennedy.

(g) To what extent were the ideas contained in the Declaration of Independence "revolutionary?"

(h) Do the "times make the man" or does the great person make history? In no more than 3 pages, discuss this question by analyzing the career of any one of the following during the period 1789 to 1811: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, John Adams.

The writing and rewriting of such papers add considerably to the work load of both teacher and student, and therefore I believe it best to postpone the last requirement, the writing of a research paper, until a second semester of a writing course in history. Too often, the "term paper" has been assigned as part of a history course requirement

as a sort of "add-on." When properly thought out and written with care, a research paper can be the capstone of a well conceived course in history and writing.

Ideally, the student should learn that writing history <u>well</u> is no child's play. The rounding of every sentence and every paragraph has to be made consistent with a score of facts, some of them known only to the author, some of them perhaps discovered or remembered by him at the last moment to the entire destruction of some carefully erected artistic structure.

The idea that histories which are delightful to read must be the work of superficial temperaments, and that a crabby style betokens a deep thinker is the reverse of the truth. In history, as in every other field, what is easy to read has been difficult to write.

In a word, success is achieved by work and through work. If one is ready to accept this dictum, I believe the answer to the question "Can Clio Teach Writing?" is the everlasting "yea."

--Charles Poinsatte, History Department